In a country with high levels of plant diversity, where less and less financial and intellectual resources are being invested in floristic research, it is uplifting to page through these flora accounts. They contribute to the Species Plantarum series, under the auspices of the Committee of the International Organization for Plant Information. The Chrysobalanaceae is covered in a set of two volumes, which represent a lifetime invested in systematics of the family.

Ghillean Prance began assessing generic delimitations within the Chrysobalanaceae during his PhD at Oxford, under the supervision of Frank White. The dissertation marked the beginning of an extraordinary career, spent firstly at the New York Botanic Gardens as the BA Krukoff Curator of Amazonian Botany, Director and then Vice-President of Research, and finally Senior Vice-President for Science. He also established the Garden’s Institute of Economic Botany and served as its first director. In 1988 he was appointed Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. His latter years have released him from the burden of administration and much of the final preparation of these flora accounts was completed as the MacBryde Professor at the National Tropical Botanical Garden in Hawaii. Throughout these imposing appointments there is woven a thread of taxonomic dedication to the Chrysobalanaceae, which culminated in the reviewed World Flora volumes. The volumes were co-authored by his colleague from Kew, Cynthia Sothers.

The family comprises 18 genera and 531 species, with most diversity in South America. Less than 15% of the species occur in Africa, and these are primarily tropical. Only two species of Chrysobalanaceae (Parinari) occur in South Africa. The 10 genera represented in Africa are Maranthes (11 spp.), Dactyladenia (c. 30 spp.), Hirtella (two spp.), Magnistipula (21 spp.), Parinari (seven spp.), Neocarya (one sp.), Badfodeya (one sp.), Afrolicania (one sp.), Grangeria (two spp.) and Chrysobalanus (two spp.).

Volume 1 covers 10 genera, from Chrysobalanus to Parinari, and includes a brief introduction to the dynamic taxonomic position of the Chrysobalanaceae within the Anthophyta. It also holds a family key, covering the 18 constituent genera. Volume 2 covers eight genera, from Acioa to Magnistipula. The recorded distribution of each taxon is covered in nearly 600 maps of Mesoamerica, the West Indies, Cuba, South America, Indonesia, Australia and Africa. Each genus is accompanied by an exhaustive key, and species are covered with excellent descriptions and brief notes on ecology and ethnobotanical uses.

As a descriptive medium the written word often falls short of visual images, and the volumes are illustrated with 79 beautiful line drawings contributed primarily by Bobbi Angell, Margret Tebbs and Mark Fothergill, with further contributions by William Moye III, David Woolcott, HM Fukuda, Charlie Clare, Rosemary Wise, Janet Dyer, Julia Loken and Julio Dellome.

The works are a superb contribution to the literature on tropical trees and represent a welcome tool to botanists interested in the vegetation of these areas.

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**Book Review**

**Species Plantarum: Flora of the World. Part 9 Chrysobalanaceae 1. Chrysobalanus to Parinari**

**Species Plantarum: Flora of the World. Part 10 Chrysobalanaceae 2. Acioa to Magnistipula**

GT Prance and CA Sothers (edited by AE Orchard and AJG Wilson)

2003; Australian Biological Resources Study, Canberra, Australia

Part 9: 319 pages; ISBN 0 642 56832 4

Part 10: 268 pages; ISBN 0 642 56833 2

Price AU$120 per set

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